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Wisconsin Voters Come Second for Republican Lawmakers

**By Representative Debra Kolste
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It is a common saying that “nothing good happens after midnight.” Indeed, our current Governor, Scott Walker, once remarked during his 2010 campaign for the office, “Nothing good happens after midnight. That’s even more true in politics. The people of Wisconsin deserve to know what their elected leaders are voting on.”

Of course, moving quickly and in secrecy have been a hallmark of his tenure as Governor and it was perhaps never more evident than with the extraordinary session to limit the powers of the incoming Governor and Attorney General.

The bills were released at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 30 and a public hearing and vote on the legislation was scheduled for Monday, December 3. Legislators and the public were given less than 72 hours’ notice to read and analyze 300 pages of legislation, impacting every branch and agency of our state government.

Despite the short notice, 1,426 people either came to the public hearing to testify or registered their opinion on the bills. 1,425 of those people were in opposition. Over a thousand more came from all across the state to a rally outside the Capitol to voice their displeasure and hope that Republicans would come to their senses and respect the will of the voters.

Instead, after going through the motions of a public hearing, the Joint Finance Committee voted Monday evening on party lines to move the bills forward. Clearly, Republicans on the committee were impressed by the testimony of their 1 supporter.

On Tuesday, the Senate and Assembly were called in to vote on these bills. The Assembly was scheduled to convene at 1:00 p.m.. Instead, we began at 10:30 that evening as the Republican leadership in each chamber negotiated back and forth behind closed doors. After another lengthy recess we were called back to the floor at 4:30 Wednesday morning, and the final bill passed just before 8:00 a.m.. To make matters worse, one of the primary reasons for calling the extraordinary session – passing pre-existing conditions protections – failed to pass the Senate.

Some provisions that were passed, will limit early voting, prevent Governor-elect Evers from withdrawing Wisconsin from a lawsuit to invalidate the Affordable Care Act, give Republicans the ability to hire their own lawyers at taxpayer expense, and change the composition of a number of state boards, limiting the number of individual that Evers can nominate. Each of these powers was enjoyed by Governor Walker during his eight years in office.

I feel sick for the voters of this state. Their decisions for Governor and Attorney General have been cast aside not more than a month after the election and replaced by a handful of power hungry Republican legislators. Elections used to mean something because politicians respected the choices of voters. Republican politicians in Wisconsin do not believe in this democratic process. They lack the very things we expect from public servants: character, conscience, and humility.

Much will happen between now and 2020 when many of these legislators are up for re-election. Do not forget these actions.